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UNCLAS PANAMA 000153

SIPDIS

USTR FOR A.GASH-DURKIN AND J.WOLFE
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FOR INR/B

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION (PANAMA): NEW VICE MINISTER
OF TRADE, ROMEL ADAMES

1. Romel Adames (42) was appointed Vice Minister for Trade at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MICI) by President Moscoso on January 1, 2004. Adames, Harvard-educated and until recently Panama's Ambassador to the WTO, will be the lead negotiator for the GOP during the upcoming FTA negotiations with the United States. Adames replaces Meliton Arrocha, who was appointed head of CLICAC (Panama's Competition Authority). Adames, a confidant of Commerce Minister Joaquin Jacome, enters the position with considerable trade experience having also participated in Panama's WTO accession in 1997.

2. Adames is a strong advocate regarding the benefits of trade liberalization and a believer in the multilateral trading system. His main challenges will be establishing guidelines and priorities for Panama as well as outreach to the private sector during this election year. (Note: National elections are scheduled for May 2, with a new administration taking office on September 1.) While the GOP would like the first FTA negotiating round to take place before the May 2 national elections, Jacome and Adames insist the Moscoso Administration will treat the FTA negotiations as a State endeavor and keep politics out of the process. Both plan extensive consultation with the economic advisors of opposition political candidates and the wider private sector. (Note: All political parties support the negotiation of a FTA with the U.S.)

3. Biographical Information:

D/POB: July 20, 1961 in Panama City, Panama

Marital Status: Divorced

Education:

- 1996. Awarded master's degree in Public Administration and certificate in International Tax Law in a joint program between the Law School and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.
- 1989. Awarded master's degree in International and Comparative Law (Cum Laude) from Vrije University in Brussels, Belgium.
- 1988. Awarded bachelor's degree in Law and Political Science from the University of Santa Maria La Antigua in Panama.

Previous Professional Experience:

- 2002. Appointed Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Panama to the WTO in Geneva, Switzerland.
- 2001. Appointed Commissioner (but never ratified) of Panama's Competition Authority (CLICAC).
- 1999. Named head of the Financial Department at Hutchinson Whampoa Ltd. in Panama City, Panama.
- 1996. Hired as a consultant for Price Waterhouse Coopers in Panama City, Panama.
- 1993. Appointed Commercial Counselor at Panama's Embassy to the European Union and Belgium.
- 1990. Hired as a legal consultant to Panama's Ministry of the Presidency.

Languages:

- Native: Spanish
- Foreign: French and English (excellent)

WATT